

in each room where, just before lunch, all who are going to remain for lunch receive one from the host or hostess who has charge of everything pertaining to the cafeteria. These napkins are placed on the table with the edge parallel to the edge of the table; the food is removed from the bags and placed on the napkins.

At first we were doubtful about this plan for fear some child would be embarrassed. Later we found it to be the best thing we did. For the first week or two the teacher in charge and the principal quietly observed the kind, the amount, and the appearance of the lunches, but said nothing. Later those who had poorly balanced menus were privately spoken to and told what to bring. One pale boy was seen to have five different cakes for lunch one day and nothing else. This was corrected. Nothing was ever said to any one child about the appearance of his lunch but in a few months a great change was noted both in the kinds of food and the neatness of the preparation. The cashier reserved the right to correct the selection of food of children who bought their lunches. A limited amount of candy cannot be bought until the regular lunch is eaten.

As many of the children ate too rapidly in order to get out to play, it was decided that no one was to rise from the table until about half of the children had finished—when a whistle was blown. This, in a way, corrected the bad habit. The whistle meant that they could leave but were not compelled to; many of the children remained quietly eating and chatting. We found that the children had better times with the rooms eating as a unit, instead of the boys as one unit and the girls as another. Besides, it was much easier to keep order.

The host and hostess meet with the principal once a month to discuss affairs and take back to the rooms any suggestions offered at this time. Some rooms change the host or hostess frequently and some keep

the same ones for a long time. When the teacher wishes to know what is going on, or when the host or hostess suggests that she is needed, the teacher eats with the children but volunteers no adverse criticism. One day when a teacher was eating with her group, there came in a boy who did not customarily eat at school. When the whistle blew he started to leave. The hostess, a very small girl, said, "You cannot leave until you say, 'Excuse me.'" He immediately replied, "I won't say it." "Then you will have to stay until you do say it," said the hostess. After a fairly long time the boy meekly said, "Excuse me, Peggy." All this time the teacher ate quietly on, wondering about the outcome.

The whole atmosphere of the cafeteria has changed since the responsibility has been placed upon the children. The period is now a pleasant one due to the grouping of children who have the same interests. The conversation is easy and spirited: the hostess is one of them and they do not have the feeling that an older person is checking on them. One host's deep voice often booms out: "Keep quiet, can't you? Ain't you got no table manners?"

VADA WHITESEL.

## THE ALTERNATIVE TO REVOLUTION

IN one of the most vivid episodes of the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah is surrounded by a people divided in loyalty between the worship of Baal, one of the numerous gods of the idolatrous Israelites, and the worship of the Lord who was, to Elijah, the true God. Like the followers of Baal, before Elijah forced the issue, we, before the depression sobered us, were content to drift. We were so busy clipping coupons we refused to consider basic issues of national policy. Why bother about the conflicting claims of the Lord and Baal as



long as the market was bullish? Maybe a few million Americans were left in the outer darkness that ringed the charmed circle of the prosperous. What of it! The poor we would always have with us! Things, by and large, were going good. Judged by the indices of the economists, we had entered a New Era from which the traditional ebbs and flows of enterprise had been outlawed. Down with the Cassandras! Up with the Pollyannas! We tolerated but did not take seriously these Socratic skeptics who insisted upon asking where the nation was headed.

#### *Story Different Now*

It is a different story now. The house of cards fell about our ears in 1929. A new mood begins to fall over the American mind. The myriad millions begin to lose faith in facile panaceas that put plasters on this and that effect while basic causes of the disease are left untouched. Here and there erstwhile blind leaders begin to realize that decisions more basic than any yet faced must be made. There are, of course, Americans who still see in the situation no more than a chance to rehabilitate outworn economic dogmas and restore to power obsolete political leaderships. But, despite the instances of retarded intelligence still manifest in some business and political circles, events are rapidly educating us to the necessity of a bold clarity of decision on a few basic policies.

Despite the rapidity with which events are educating us, we have still to prove that we are equal to the challenge of these decisions. We are still halting between two opinions. We have yet to get either the Lord or Baal a clear vote. We are still suffering from that disintegration of will Guglielmo Ferrero so brilliantly diagnosed in his Words to the Deaf about a decade ago.

"There have been epochs more uncouth, poorer, and more ignorant than our own," he wrote, "but they knew what they wanted.

"What do we want?" he asked, and then went on to say, "That is the essential question. Every man and every epoch should keep this question constantly before them, just as a lamp is kept burning day and night in dark places."

#### *Beginning of Statesmanship*

Ferrero is right. This is the essential question. To know what we want is the beginning of statesmanship. Do we know what we want? Here in America? Now? Do we know what we want government to be and do in relation to the whole mechanism of American life and enterprise over which, at its moment of highest potential power, the chill and shadow of a vast futility fell? Do we know what we want from statesmanship? Is it sheltered security or a chance to adventure in a fair field? Do we know what kind of political order we want? Do we know what kind of social order we want? Do we know what kind of economic order we want? Ferrero thinks not.

"On the contrary," he says, "our will is in a state of complete confusion. Sometimes it is split in twain, at once desirous of benefits that are mutually exclusive. Sometimes it entirely strays away from reason and reality, lured on by a mirage. This disorder of the will is the disease from which our age is dying."

Again, Ferrero is right. We cannot make the decisions demanded of us at this historic juncture in American affairs unless we conquer this paralyzing indecision of will.

What are these decisions events are demanding of us? Without wasting words in introduction, I want, in the manner of the ancient Elijah and the modern Ferrero, to put to you four major alternatives which, to me, are alternatives between Reality and Illusion, alternatives in which the survival and the significance of American life and enterprise are alike involved.

(1) Are we to strengthen democracy or surrender to dictatorship?



(2) Are we to pursue our enterprise in freedom or under regimentation?

(3) Are we to establish control of this age of plenty or execute a return to an age of scarcity?

(4) Are we to walk the ways of a realistic internationalism or go in for the economic monasticism of the nationalists?

The nation's schools owe their students and the adult public something more than a neutral listing of these dilemmas of your time. Schools must set lamps burning in those dark places where social decisions falter for want of light. The nation has the right to expect from its educators candor of judgment upon even the most controversial issues.

#### *Democracy vs. Dictatorship*

I turn to the issue of democracy versus dictatorship. Dramatic secessions from democracy have everywhere marked the post-war politics of the world. Even those democracies that have not gone bankrupt and made formal assignment of their political liberties to some de jure or de facto dictatorship have had to reckon with a growing skepticism of the democratic dogma. The issue is joined. We must decide whether we are to strengthen democracy or surrender to dictatorship.

The destiny of democracy on this continent will depend entirely upon our success or failure in solving the economic problem. If we can now move with reasonable rapidity towards a soundly based and widely distributed economic wellbeing, essential democracy is not likely to be seriously challenged during the generation. But whether we are to succeed or fail in solving the economic problem is still on the lap of the gods. For all our brave whistling in the dark, we are still far from out of the woods.

Democracy is not invested with any inevitable immortality. Towards the end of his life, the late Lord Bryce ventured the judgment that there were few countries in

which freedom seemed safe for the century ahead. "When the spiritual oxygen which has kept alive the attachment to liberty and self-government in the minds of the people becomes exhausted," he wrote, "will not the flame burn low and flicker out?" This is a question we may well ask ourselves as we attempt to assess the American outlook.

I shall not conceal my conviction that, despite its manifest weaknesses, democracy is, in the long run, both safer than and superior to dictatorship, despite the swift efficiencies some dictators may seem to bring to a phase of emergency.

#### *Democracy Broadens Judgment*

The cardinal strength of democracy is that it broadens the base of judgment upon which policy is built. All of us, with varying degrees of effect, can chip in on the discussion that determines policy. The cardinal weakness of dictatorship is that it narrows the base of judgment upon which policy is built. Policy is determined solely by the dictator and his particular brand of expert adviser.

The greater the complexities of an age the broader we should make the base of judgment upon which its policies are built. The complexities of our age are limitless. The capacities of its leaders are limited. Less than at any time in human history can we afford to put all our eggs in one basket. Less than at any time in human history can we afford to bully into silence the voice of corrective criticism, intimidate minority opinion, and give unquestioned right-of-way to the green dogmatisms of politics and economics that sprout so lavishly from the improvisings of crisis-driven statesmen. And yet this is today happening the world around wherever the minds of men have been seduced by the dramatic promises of dictatorship.

Dictatorship is founded upon fear and faith. Democracy rests upon leadership and popular understanding. Democracy is singularly important in an hour of crisis if



leadership is derelict and popular understanding darkened, but its basic concept is sounder than the concept of dictatorship.

—GLENN FRANK.

## PUBLIC CO-OPERATION AND THE MERIT SYSTEM

**W**HY for more than fifty years has a merit system of examinations for public employees been struggling for recognition? And why have only three out of forty-eight states made it the cornerstone of government by putting it into their constitutions where fickle legislatures cannot tamper with it?

The politicians, of course, have always found fault with examinations, for as far as the law has any teeth in it, it obstructs their spoils system. Under this system, no person need think of applying for any position unless he has good political backing, and (though no appointing officer will admit it) the place often goes to the man who has the strongest pull.

Until the depression came and the taxpayer's pocket nerve was hard hit, politicians continued in power because they gave jobs and favors with a lavish hand. They used the public money to pay these pet job holders, and defied the law which says all positions (except a very few that are policy forming) must be filled by competitive examinations. Thus the merit system is strangled between an apathetic or skeptical public and a group of greedy politicians.

### *Repeal Group Organized*

Growing bolder during this public indifference and ignorance, the politicians have now started a national Civil Service Repeal Association. Here is what they say:

"This association affords the avenue for a return to the old order of individual merit, in the making of appointments. . . Civil Ser-

vice Commissions are costly and increase the cost of government. Such commissions should be abolished because they do not offer to the logical (sic!) candidate the means of appointment to the position he desires and which, it is known, he can fill efficiently.

"Civil Service prevents executives in public offices from appointing persons to deputyships who have helped (sic!) the political party in power.

"Civil Service examinations are costly and do not bring harmony (sic!) to any form of government, in addition to the high cost. Instead, it brings discord and unrest by failing to give to those persons qualified a position in some department of governmental activity.

"The Civil Service Repeal Association has been formed and will conduct a vigorous campaign for legal repeal (under initiative and referendum laws) of Civil Service laws throughout the country, starting in the state in which the association has its headquarters—Ohio."

What has brought this repeal association about? The leaders of the Democratic, Republican, and Socialist parties are each at the head of a lot of office seekers, no better than a pack of wolves. Many of these wolves are in sheep's clothing, having even fooled themselves into believing they were sheep, and some of them would not be such bad sheep if and only if they had something to eat. How can they help being hungry after starving in this depression?

### *Blames Early Training*

But who let them grow up believing that the "public office" trough was their trough and to the victor belong the spoils? The answer is plain—a public school system which gives a one-year anemic course in civics and has failed to develop an alert public sentiment against attacks on the merit system. These civics courses give the student but a limited grasp of the mechanism and framework of government, perhaps a casual mention of the Civil Service